1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

[P.4]

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A naming ceremony—women sitting in front of the mother's hut. (Crowd includes Diana Cohen, wife of the author).

Horsemen saluting a chief in Magumeri.

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rare circumstances women themselves initiate the proceedings by announcing the divorce, although this is usually done with a circumlocution such as when she says, as one woman did, "There is nothing holding us together but these gifts that you have given me. Take them. I wish to go." 593 586

About eighty to ninety percent of all marriages end in divorce, probably because it is such a simple affair. The husband in most cases simply tells the wife to go, saying "I divorce you." He does not say it three times, as is usual in Islamic countries, because the wife may return, for the Kanuri practice of Muslim marriage is such that, after saying "I divorce you," three times there should be no reconciliation or remarriage. Once a pronouncement of divorce has been made the woman leaves her husband's household and the marriage enters a special hundred-day period in which the woman cannot remarry although the man may do so. This is defined as a waiting period to see whether or not the woman is pregnant so that the man can claim the child. The woman generally returns to her *luwali* at this time and there is always some negotiation between the man and the *luwali* to see whether or not the marriage can be patched up. About one-third of all divorce pronouncements do end in reconciliation even though the husband most often divorces her again later on. It is interesting to note that unlike western society, practically no Kanuri divorce cases (perhaps one percent) go to the courts; thus it is impossible to get the records of divorce except through field study of actual cases. [979] [114]

When a divorce occurs children remain with their father unless they are still nursing. After nursing they are generally sent back to the father's household, although the period is sometimes stretched out for young girls who are trained by their mothers. Children of broken unions are cared for by a father's co-wife or by some other close relative of the father. Contacts with a divorced parent are always maintained and the child visits his or her mother regularly. This is especially true for boys who expect to take care of their mother when she is an elderly unmarried woman. Conflicts sometimes arise because a man's daughter does not return and the mother's relatives or one of her subsequent husbands might try to arrange a marriage without consulting her own father. If such consultations take place, however, no one feels put out and the man who arranged the marriage takes a portion of the bridewealth in payment.

Each spouse in a marriage maintains very close contacts with his or her own relatives. Presents are exchanged and visits back and forth between members of kin groups are very common. Children are named after relatives, especially grandparents, and in many cases go to live with them after weaning, or before the birth of a new baby in the family. Only in cases of long term marriage does a wife finally come to feel a part of and fully accepted by her husband's family. However when this does happen the wife can become a very powerful voice in the family, and her long and intimate association with her husband often means that she has become a permanent authority in the household. In one such case a senior wife had never been married to anyone else and had been married to her husband, a powerful man in the village, for thirty years. The man remarked that he made very few decisions without consulting this woman, and people recognized that she had a powerful position in village affairs. Such cases, however, are not common. Kanuri marriage involves a separation of the sexes not only by custom and tradition but as a result of the conflicts in marriage relations which produce tensions between husbands and 593 602 [553] 593

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this food is given as charity to the older women of the group who have no husbands. Both of these acts, the giving of the food and the sending out of the kola nuts, are said to be the formal announcement of the new baby's birth as well as an invitation to attend the naming ceremony held on the eighth day after birth, that is to say on the same day one week later.

It is worth noting at this point that these precautions are well adapted to the facts of Kanuri life. Infant mortality is extremely common, varying for example between 122 and 240 per thousand in the urban areas where the hospitals have been keeping records. This is especially true of the first few hours and days after birth. One man in Magumeri had only two children alive out of nine born to him and his one wife, and five of these nine had died within the first eight days of life. Although this case is somewhat exceptional, it is not difficult to hear of comparable reports throughout the emirate. The Kanuri see many of these deaths as being the result of someone's or something's (a spirit, for instance) malevolent intentions. Charms and prayers are used and divination by religious leaders is sometimes resorted to because of the insecurity the parents feel over the survival of their newborn infant. Thus the eight-day period before the naming ceremony is a cultural buffer, a cushion that allows for the disappointment and grief associated with the highly possible death of the infant.

The Naming

Early in the morning of the eighth day the formal naming ceremony is performed. As they do for all public gatherings, men and women go separately; the women, in groups formed into single files according to rank, move past the men who are seated on the ground near the entrance to the compound. The ground millet flour and other foods received at this time as gifts allow the wife to prepare her husband's food during her confinement without engaging in a most arduous part of her work—that of grinding the millet into flour. Inside the compound the women sit in front of the mother's hut chatting gaily and coloring their teeth with tobacco flowers and a local plant used specifically for this purpose. The barber and his young assistant or apprentice arrive and cut facemarks on the new-born infant and then remove its uvula. While waiting to carry out this ritual function, the barber and his assistants cut the women's hair free of charge as a mark of the festiveness of the occasion. The women collect some money for the barber which is given to him after the baby has been successfully incised. The ceremony ends when perfume is passed among the women and all assembled dip their fingers in tiny bottles or a glass, then rub the scent over their neck and hands. Many, however, stay on talking and chatting for several hours before drifting back in small groups to their own compounds.

In front of the compound the men sit on mats. On one side of the gate sit the *mallams* (religious practitioners) reading from the Koran. On the other side of the infant's hut are the men of the household sitting in order of seniority with the most senior closest to the door. Next to them are their close friends, relatives, and the highest ranking people in attendance. The rest spread out along the north side of the compound under its front wall and everyone waits for the name to be an-

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nounced. Every man contributes a small cash gift of two to five shillings, given as a token of friendship and esteem and collected by a close friend of the father of the new child. The money is used to pay the barber and the *mallams* who say prayers to ensure the safety of the child and his future success.

When the barber has finished his work, the father sends in a friend to tell the women the name he has chosen for the new child. Ideally his friend should return and then announce the name to the men outside, but very often the men are told at the same time. Now the baby is a person; it has a name; its sex is known; it has joined the compound and the community. The senior *mallam* leads everyone in a prayer and the ceremony is over. Kola nuts and perfume are passed around among the men and the new father gives a few pennies to each reader of the Koran and several shillings to the senior *mallam*. It is a memorable day for the parents and there is general rejoicing among those who know about the ceremony and are related in some way to the family. One informant put it this way:

> Everyone is happy because the father and mother have shown that they have practiced the customs of our people, and they have shown that they have been blessed with good fortune because "the little kitten" has become a person.

Especially pleased on such occasions is the namesake of the new baby, if he is alive, for it is a public recognition of the respect and affection shown to this person by the family. Very often the name used is that of the grandparent. The Kanuri very often take turns using grandparent's names on both sides of the family although some insist that boys be named from the father's side and girls from the mother's. However, parents may also name children after an important person or a person to whom the father owes some subordination. The Kanuri, like people in many places, avoid using the names of their own parents or parents-in-law and high status or elderly people in general. Therefore the child is given a nickname that often indicates his or her relationship to the person whose name he bears. For example, many Kanuri boys are named Abba Gana (small father) or simply Abba (father) indicating that they have been named after the father of one of their parents. The link to the grandparent is even closer if the latter has been named after *his* grandparent making him a person who is called Abba Gana as well. Thus the grandson can, in practice, share both his grandfather's "real" name and his nickname as well. Sometimes the mother is referred to in a name, or even the order of one's birth in relation to other children. Thus two of the contemporary sons of the royal family in Bornu are called Abba Kiari Kura and Abba Kiari Shuwa. These men are half brothers named after their royal grandfather—Kiari. Indeed Kiari itself is a circumlocution meaning "old" or "the old one." Kura means "the big one" or "the oldest brother," and Shuwa refers to the tribal membership of Abba Kiari Shuwa's mother. Thus one son, Abba Kiari Kura, is called "father, the old one, the eldest," or "the eldest one named after my father, the old one," and the other brother, Abba Kiari Shuwa, is "father, the old one, the Shuwa," or the "son of the Shuwa wife who is named after my father, the old one." Abba Kiari's real name, Mustafa, never appears in these well-known names of his grandsons who are his recognized namesakes. Sometimes a name reflects the title of the person that the child is named after. Thus Mallam Kumbar refers to the title of the particular person's grandfather, who was Kumbar in the court of the king. Or again, sometimes

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it refers to a family event, such as Gambo, "the person who was born after twins." Names, then, reflect many of the social relationships and social circumstances of the individual being named and his relationship to those around him. However, the main point of the naming ceremony is quite clear. As one Kanuri put it,

> We celebrate the naming because the child and the family are fortunate; the infant has escaped death and entered successfully into life; it is therefore a joyful occasion.

Infancy

For the first eighteen months of his life a child is referred to exclusively as *tiful* or new-born infant without anyone referring to its age. The period marks the beginning of the infant's membership in society and its most obvious sign is breast-feeding. Perhaps the best single word to describe the infant period is that of "introduction," for during these first few months the baby is introduced to the family, to friends of the family, the neighborhood, the ward, indeed to the community as a whole.

Any jealousy or antagonism felt towards the new baby by its older brothers and sisters is recognized as such and dealt with firmly but gently. Even cats are supposed to be jealous of new babies and are prevented by adults from coming near them. Very often an older brother or sister is sent away from the house to a nearby compound during the period of the birth, especially if there is a grandparent living close by. On the day of the naming ceremony all the older children in the family up to the age of ten receive little gifts in honor of the occasion. At one ceremony we saw a little boy of two and a half being brought back from the grandparent's house where he had been living for about a week. He was brought to the new infant and told, "This is our new baby. Be kind to him and look after him." All the children of the household were given little gifts that same day and told the same thing. After the ceremony was over many of the women in the compound devoted some time to playing with the children and showing them affection. Everyone pointed out repeatedly what a fine thing it was for the children to have a new brother in the family. If during the next few weeks the older children should show any signs of hostility they are sent away again to another compound for periods up to a month or two. At this new compound they are told again and again about the necessity of showing affection and being responsible for younger brothers and sisters. In other words, "sibling rivalry" is understood, anticipated, and dealt with in a way that reduces tensions and calmly recognizes the normality of an older child's jealousy when all attention turns to a new baby in the family.

The new infant spends most of its first eighteen months with its mother. However, short sorties with older sisters occur now and then. On the other hand, the father has very little to do with the child at this stage, although he often comes by to see it. The baby soon learns to sit quietly while it is swaddled in a straddling-sitting position on its mother's back. Toilet training at this stage is minimal. The mother, rather than the child, tries to learn when the child is likely to urinate. At first the child is merely wiped clean by the mother, but as soon as it can sit up, it is placed astride her ankles with its back resting on her upturned feet. A little hole is

592 slaves living within the compound as part of the household may
567
565 be children or young girls, or they may be chirs. Murshe who
bear children are freed by virtue of being the mother of their
[428] master's child, though they remain murshe. Such a child inher-
its equally with children borne to a wife.

592 At present there are many powerful and wealthy household
556 heads who are not members of the aristocracy or royalty. These
565 men, though they do not own slaves, are important men in the
larger towns, and their households reflect their wealth and
592 their social importance. Included as part of their household
597 may be children who have been given to them and are their adopted
sons. Children are frequently given by their parents to indi-
viduals in other households, where they grow up. There are two
types of 'giving': a child may be given to a close relative,
such as to one's childless brother or to one's mother, whose
children are all grown and whose house is now empty. A man
blessed with many children of his own will give a child to a
592 relative. Another sort of giving involves naming the child
597 after an important man (the child's chibuna). The chibuna then
557
• [553] has the option of asking for the child after it is weaned, or
later, so that the child will grow up in his household as his
adopted son. A child growing up as part of an important man's
household will have many possibilities open to him, possibili-
ties not available to the common man. The parents make the
initial choice when they name the child, indicating that they
would wish their son to grow up in his chibuna's household. The

[GEIDAM]

592 households is there any indication of patrilocal residence and of a patrilocal extended family. The only approximation is found in the cases of elderly mothers living with their married sons, and in the case of married younger brothers with wife and child. More distant relatives are also found; although two cases of ElBrSo are present, in no case is there an elder brother living in the household of his younger brother, where the younger brother is the acknowledged household head. The same is true of a wife's relatives living in the household of her husband. There are six cases of this; four are younger siblings of the wife, one is her ElBrDa, and one a grandson. 592 An older sibling of the wife is nowhere present. The same pat- 586 tern is evident in the zogors who are temporarily a part of a household, after a divorce. A zogor returns to the household of her luwali. Seven zogors are present in the above households. Three are not related to the household head who served as luwali; four are relatives--a YoSi, an ElBrDa, a YoSi of the wife and a cousin.

592 597 565 463 [553] Corresponding to the eight children who were given away to relatives or to chibuna by the members of the sample are the children given to members of the sample and growing up in their houses. There are six chibuna, young children named after the household head and growing up in his house, who are a part of the present group of households. Four of these are found in the canteen traders, one in the aristocracy, and one 592 597 (an ElBrSo) among the talaka. It is evident, therefore, that

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602 individuals involved and traditionally as a cultural value also increases as simple nona is made more rewarding by the progressive addition of more and more patri-aman.

Joking Relationships (suli)

Joking relationships (suli) among the Kanuri refer to a quality in interpersonal relations wherein the customary behavioural restrictions based on seniority, generation and sex differences are relaxed and a formalized pattern of permissiveness of some kind obtains between the parties.

603 The most diffuse or broadly based joking relationship is that between ego and his grandparents and great-grandparents, if
[555] any of the latter are alive. In many cases Kanuri children are
[591] partially raised by their grandparents, being taken from their mother
[553] just after weaning. This is especially true when the child is called after his grandparent which is often the case since naming customs generally bring names from alternate generations down the descent system. The child usually has the most intimate and fondest joking relationship with his namesake grandparent, if this person lives close by or adopts him. When this is not the case, the grandparent residing closest is the person with whom a more intimate
553 joking relationship is established. The naming rule gives no prefer-
602 ence to matrilateral or patrilateral kinship; successive children must be named after and/or adopted by each of the spouse's parents alternatively. Thus neither side must obtain a namesake from the same marriage union twice in a row. The reason given for this custom of alternation is that it helps to prevent conflict and jealousy between a man and his wife as well as between the married couple and

553 602 their respective kindred and in-laws. There is no rule about which group should take precedence although the comparative social status of the patrilateral and matrilateral kin seems to be a major factor in the decision. Informants claimed that the child must be taken away from his grandparents some time before puberty and brought under the direct control of his parents so that he (or she) may learn proper respect (bàrzum) because there is no bàrsùm, they said, when there is much suli. Table I indicates that this latter judgment is only an approximation to the overall pattern since 14.9% of all responses by ego to grandparents indicate the presence of some respect (bàrzum) behaviour. As a general rule the reciprocality of the joking relationships between alternate generations of the kinship system, extending to include the third ascendant and descendant generations (the yeiya) follows a pattern of more respect between ego and his grandparents and more freindship and fondness between ego and his grandchildren.

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It is not uncommon to see a grandparent visiting his or her friends always in the company of their little joking partners. As the friends sit down to chat of the latest gossip of the day, the grandchild plays nearby, then comes over and nestles in the grandparent's arms, pulls at articles of dress on his person, or pulls at grandfather's beard, and acts generally in a quietly affectionate manner. The observer is struck more with the genuine fondness and affection of the relationship, at its early stages, than with its so-called joking content. As the child grows older the joking aspect becomes more noticeable. The grandparent will point out a young playmate of the opposite sex and say to him -

603 that is your wife, is it?, or to her - that is your husband, eh?
[152] All the restrictions on any show of emotion with own parents are noticeable by their absence in the affective nature of the grandparent joking relationship with its openly expressible fondness and friendship. That there is some discipline involved is indicated by the fact that the child is very often socialized in a grandparent's
[862] house. One grandparent was observed very patiently taking the left hand of his little namesake out of the food bowl, every time the child attempted to eat with this taboo instrument. One adult informant summed up his own attitudes towards the relationship as follows:

> You may pull your kaka's (grandparent's) beards, or go into his house and take his possessions, and he will not mind - he is happy because his children have borne children. If you have a yeiya (great-grandparent) alive, it is the same with him.

[602] [553] Although the suli (joking) relationship holds for all members of the second and third ascendant and descendant generations it focuses for an individual in its most memorable and frequently emphasized form, between himself and his grandparent-namesake, his
603 chuwuna. Many Kanuri names are convertible from male to female
553 forms and thus, cases of a grandchild named after a grandparent of
[551] opposite sex are known. The important point is that the chuwuna (namesake) relationship is most often associated with the practise
553 of grandparent joking relations and possible adoptions. This obser-
571 vation is validated by looking at other chuwuna relationships in the kinship system or between close friends. If a child is named after a father's brother or his father's friend, he and that person have a mildly permissive joking relationship. They address each

553 other as chuwuna and refer and act towards one another in a similar
571 fashion to that of grandparents and grandchildren. For parents this becomes an avenue for showing affection to a collateral relative or a close friend in much the same way as we appoint our own children's
553 god-parents. This naming custom is also a means of establishing
557 profitable relations both for the parents (especially the father) and for the child. Consequently, in the Kanuri state there are a great many children called after District Heads, aristocrats of the state, rich men, and people in high status positions generally. The previous chief of Magumeri District had been a particularly beneficent and popular political leader of the area. When he departed to take up residence in another District he left in his wake a large number of children who had been named after him. The reason for giving names in this way is not only to flatter or honour the person
[597] involved. There is a very conscious awareness that the namesake relation includes the possibility of adoption as frequently occurs in the case of the grandparent-grandchild relation. Thus there is in this extension outwards and often upwards of the chuwuna relation an attempt to better or at least increase the social relations of the family and especially, it is hoped, of the child.

607 There is a joking relationship between ego and his spouse's younger siblings, real and classificatory, of either sex.
[601] Informants are emphatic in denying that it is possible even in joking
[582] to call Wi-Yo-Sis "wife" or "little wife" as do the Hausa.(1) Marriage with Wi-Yo-Sis is taboo unless the present wife is dead. Informants

(1) Smith, M.G., op. cit. p. 43

On the Friday within the eight-day period, or several days before this if the child is born on a Friday, two or three kola nuts are sent to the males of the town who are friends and relatives of the household, as well as to important persons of the immediate area. This serves as an announcement of the birth of a new member to the household, and as an invitation to the naming ceremony which takes place on the eighth day after birth.

The Naming

On the morning of the eighth day after birth the formal naming ceremony (su) takes place. As to all public gatherings, men and women come and go separately. The women, bringing food and flour, arrive in single file, senior women in front of junior in rank, and pass, eyes downcast, into the compound to the women's section. The ground millet flour allows the young wife to cook for her husband during the next few weeks without going through the arduous task of grinding millet. The women sit out in front of the hut of the mother chatting gaily and colouring their teeth, while the mother remains in her hut. The barber arrives to cut the face marks and remove the uvula of the child.

In front of the compound the men sit on either side of the entrance hut. On the left side (as you come out of the compound) a senior mallam, other mallams, and mallams-in-training, read the entire Koran by passing out several pages to each of the literates who have come for this purpose. On the right hand side of the entrance hut the men of the household sit on mats in order of seniority, with close friends or high status persons waiting patiently for the reading to finish and the name to be announced. All males usually contribute some money (two to five shillings varying up to one pound for high status visitors) as a token of friendship. The

553 money, which helps to allay the expenses of the ceremony, is collected by a close friend of the father of the new child. When the face marks have been cut, and the uvula removed, the father sends a subordinate to tell the women inside the name he has chosen for his/ child. When the subordinate returns the name is supposedly revealed to the seated men. However, the father or his friend, who has collected the money, usually tells the gathered men at the same time as the women are being told. It is at this time that the sex of the child is made public. The Koran reading being finished the head mallam leads the entire male assemblage in the fatiha (first verse of the Koran) and the ceremony is over. Kola nuts are passed around to all males, as well as perfume for dipping the fingers, and prayer beads. Each reader of the Koran receives a few pennies, in addition, as a token of gratitude from the new father. He must also give a small present of money to the barber and the head mallam as well as the leading woman who helped organize the activities inside the compound. Each of these may receive a couple of chickens or more if the father is wealthy and/or wishes to give the impression that he is a "big" man.

[231] A ram is killed and cooked during the day by the women of the compound, their relatives and friends. The skin is given to the head mallam. Some food is given to the poor, and at the father's instructions, other portions are sent to the houses of relatives, friends and high status persons. The naming ceremony is a day of keen pleasure for the namesake of the new child, if he or she is present, for it is a public recognition of the respect and affection with which they are regarded by the family.

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Generally speaking, Kanuri names are passed on through alternative generations. Ideally a man and his wife take turns obtaining names from each of their descent groups. Some men insist that boys be given names from the patrilateral group, while allowing girls to be named after the mother's relatives. As we have seen, a parent may name his child after some high status person thus establishing what is hoped will be a fruitful namesake relationship.

551 There is a non-reciprocal name avoidance between ego and his parents, parents-in-law, and high status persons in general. In order to avoid using a name the parents give the child, a nickname which usually indicates his relationship to the person whose name he bears.

[553] Thus many young boys are called Aba gana (small father) or just Aba (father) which indicates that they have been called after the father of one of their parents.

Infancy

858 For the first eighteen months (lunar) the child is referred to exclusively as a tiful (infant, baby) regardless of its sex. This period marks the beginning of the individual's incorporation into society. Its criterion is breast feeding. In social rather than individual terms the period is one of introduction. The infant is introduced to its family, to the friends of the family and

858 to its community. Sibling rivalry is recognized and dealt with

867 gently but firmly. The Kanuri believe that a sibling, especially one who shares one or both of his parents with the new arrival, may exhibit antagonism towards the baby. Very often the older sibling is sent off to a nearby compound, usually to a grandparent, for the period of the birth. It returns to receive gifts from the parents